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Chairman: Mr. ELARABY (Egypt)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.20 a.m.

TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF MR. KAYSONE PHOUMVIHAN, PRESIDENT OF THE LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

The CHAIRMAN: It is with deep regret that I must inform the Committee of the passing of His Excellency Mr. Kaysone Phoumvihan, President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic. On behalf of the Committee, and on my own behalf, I request the representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic to convey our heartfelt condolences to the Government and people of his country and to the bereaved family.

I invite representatives to stand and observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of the late President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

The members of the First Committee observed a minute of silence.

Mr. THAMMAYONG (Lao People's Democratic Republic): My delegation is deeply moved by the words of sympathy and condolence expressed on your own behalf, Mr. Chairman, and on behalf of all the members of this Committee on the passing of the President of our country, Mr. Kaysone Phoumvihan, which occurred on 21 November in Vientiane.

Mr. Kaysone Phoumvihan had been ill for some time. With his demise, our country has lost one of the most glorious sons of its contemporary history. Therefore, on behalf of my delegation, I should like to express our profound gratitude for your expression of sympathy in this painful moment.

AGENDA ITEM 66 (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE, CONSIDERATION OF AND ACTION ON DRAFT RESOLUTIONS ON THE QUESTION OF ANTARCTICA

The CHAIRMAN: I call on the representative of Malaysia, who will introduce draft resolution A/C.1/47/L.54.

Mr. REDZUAN (Malaysia): On behalf of the co-sponsors, Antigua and Barbuda, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Mauritius (on behalf of the African Group), Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Yemen and my own country, Malaysia, I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/47/L.54, "question of Antarctica", for consideration by the Committee and the General Assembly. This year, there will be only one draft resolution on this subject, as the African Group has chosen to merge its draft into the main text.

I wish to highlight specifically the positive developments on the question of Antarctica that are reflected in the draft resolution this year, especially in relation to the successful outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio in June this year. We believe that the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties have expressed their commitment to enter into international cooperation on environmental issues, which we could build on in a global spirit to protect the Antarctic environment. In this regard, we urge the Consultative Parties to consider the possibility of organizing an annual seminar or symposium concerning issues relating to the environment, to convene beginning in 1993, with the broadest international participation possible.

We believe that through this annual seminar or symposium, a closer and deeper understanding of the problems involved in protecting the Antarctic environment, which have many direct links to the global environmental system, could be shared by the rest of the international community and especially by those in the research fields.

(Mr. Redzuan, Malaysia)

In the draft resolution, we welcome the positive move by the Antarctic Treaty Contracting Parties to provide information to the Secretary-General by submitting the report of the Sixteenth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting. It is very useful for us to follow the progress of discussions among the Consultative Parties, as they have a great bearing on the overall consideration of the question of Antarctica. The submission of the report is in line with our call for greater transparency, and we urge the Consultative Parties to continue providing such information and more documents covering all aspects of Antarctica in the future.

We acknowledge the involvement of some of the United Nations specialized agencies and programmes following the invitation of the Consultative Parties to participate in the Sixteenth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting last year. We are encouraged by this development, and we continue to urge the Consultative Parties to extend an invitation to the Secretary-General or his representative for future meetings.

The draft resolution also highlights the positive developments on the part of the United Nations Secretariat including that of the Department of Public Information in producing a background paper entitled Protecting the Earth's Last Great Wilderness: Antarctica. It is a very commendable effort indeed. We look forward to seeing more of such publications on Antarctica produced in the future, within existing resources, as we believe they will contribute immensely to educating and raising the awareness of the general public on the need to preserve the continent of Antarctica and to keep the management and use of Antarctica in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

We also noted the important contribution of the various organizations to the preparation of the report of the Secretary-General (A/47/624). In view of

(Mr. Redzuan, Malaysia)

the importance of the information from these organizations to delegations and to members of the public, we also request the Secretary-General to explore the possibility of issuing, as official documents of the United Nations, excerpts of the data received from these organizations in future annual reports, within existing resources.

We call on the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties to prevent South Africa from participating fully in the meetings of the Consultative Parties pending the attainment of a non-racial and democratic government in that country.

In conclusion, I should like to emphasize, on behalf of the sponsors, that we have chosen to take a constructive approach in our draft resolution this year. Our objective is to build on the encouraging increase in international cooperation on the environment and on scientific research in Antarctica. It is our sincere hope that the gradual involvement of the United Nations in the growing international cooperative effort will help strengthen the overall climate of peace and cooperation in Antarctica.

Mr. REFAQAT (Pakistan): The continent of Antarctica, known for its vastness and unique isolation from the rest of the world, holds special importance for a number of reasons, particularly its significance for international peace and security, its effect on the Earth's climate and the environment, its unspoilt ecology and its terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems, which are of great value to the scientific community.

Pakistan has remained firm in its commitment to the protection and preservation of the delicate environment of Antarctica and its associated ecosystems, and time and again it has expressed opposition to the exploitation of mineral resources in Antarctica.

(Mr. Refaqat, Pakistan)

We are indeed encouraged by the ban on prospecting and mining in and around Antarctica for the next 50 years, in accordance with the Madrid Protocol on Environmental Protection. It is our sincere hope and expectation that in due course a permanent ban will be imposed on prospecting, exploration and exploitation of minerals in Antarctica.

A number of scientists and environmentalists have lent increasing support to the preservation of Antarctica, which continues to retain its pristine qualities. Some of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties have also lent support to the call of the international community to preserve Antarctica as a nature reserve or world park and to ensure the protection and preservation of its environment and its dependent and associated ecosystems for the benefit of mankind. Pakistan believes that Antarctica is the "common heritage of mankind". Its protection and conservation are the common responsibility of the entire international community.

In this context, it may also be recalled that at the tenth summit meeting of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries in Jakarta, the Heads of State or Government emphasized "the geopolitical, scientific, environmental and climatic significance of Antarctica to all mankind".

The report of the Secretary-General on the state of the environment in Antarctica (A/47/624) takes note of the fact that the significance of Antarctica in the global sense was recognized by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in June this year at Rio. Furthermore, Agenda 21, adopted at that Conference, recognized the value of Antarctica as an area for the conduct of scientific research, in particular research essential to the understanding of the global environment.

(Mr. Refaqat, Pakistan)

The scientific community in Pakistan maintains a keen interest in peaceful research in Antarctica. As a result, Pakistan was able to successfully conclude its scientific expedition to Antarctica last year with the establishment of the Jinnah Antarctic Research Station. Pakistan's interest during the scientific-research process in Antarctica pertained to, among other things, the ecology of polar seas; ice-sheet dynamics; monitoring of weather conditions; detection of trace matter in ice, air and sea and its environmental effects; and geological and geophysical mapping of the area around the Jinnah Station. This expedition was entirely peaceful and scientific in character and carried out its studies in accordance with the highest environmental and ecological standards.

It was indeed a challenging task for a developing country such as Pakistan to organize and successfully manage such an enormous undertaking. Apart from the direct scientific benefits, the success of the expedition is bound to promote further the cause of scientific research in that crucial area.

It is with a sense of profound appreciation that my delegation wishes to acknowledge the valuable assistance that was given to us by a number of friendly countries that are also parties to the Antarctic Treaty system in enabling us to successfully conduct our first-ever scientific expedition to that continent. We hope that the scientific community in Pakistan will continue to receive such help and cooperation in carrying out its future scientific research work on Antarctica.

In conclusion, we would like once again to express our complete support for all efforts aimed at imposing a permanent ban on the exploitation of mineral resources in Antarctica and our deep and abiding commitment to the

(Mr. Refaqat, Pakistan)

protection and preservation of the delicate environment of Antarctica and its associated ecosystems.

The CHAIRMAN: I should like to inform members that tomorrow morning, the Committee will proceed to take action on draft resolution A/C.1/47/L.54, submitted under item 66 of the agenda, "Question of Antarctica". Subsequently, the Committee will proceed to take action on draft decision contained in document A/C.1/47/L.53 proposed by the Chairman under item 63 of the agenda.

I call on the Secretary of the Committee.

Mr. KHERADI (Secretary of the Committee): I wish to inform the Committee that, subsequent to the issuance of document A/C.1/47/L.54, the draft resolution referred to under item 66 of the agenda entitled "Question of Antarctica", the delegation of Mauritius has informed the Secretariat that Mauritius has now signed the list of sponsors of the draft resolution on behalf of all the States members of the Group of African States.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.